

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, and 6-12 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of claims 4-5, and claims 2 and 4-5 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. No new matter is added. Reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance (for the reasons discussed herein); (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration (as the amendments simply rewrite allowable dependent claims in independent form); and (c) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection. Applicants respectfully request the entry of the amendments.

Applicants gratefully appreciate that the Office Action indicates that claims 7 and 9 are allowed and claim 5 contains allowable subject matter. However, for at least the reasons described below, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims 1, 3, and 6-12 contain allowable subject matter.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 3-4, and 10 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Matsushita (U.S. Patent No. 6,501,521); rejects claim 2 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanaka (U.S. Patent No. 6,824,935); and rejects claims 6, 8, 11, and 12 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Matsushita in view of Trapani (U.S. Patent No. 6,630, 970). The rejections as they pertain to canceled claims 2 and 4 are now moot. However, Applicants traverse the rejections as they pertain to the remainder of the claims.

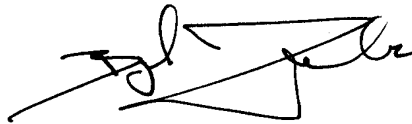
Specifically, claim 1 is amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 4 and allowable claim 5.

In accordance with the above remarks, Applicants submit that independent claims 1, 7, and 9 define patentable subject matter. Claims 3, 6, 8, and 10-12 depend from claim 1, and therefore, also define patentable subject matter. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the §102(b) and §103(a) rejections.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1, 3, and 6-12 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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